

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 14th session, April 20 – May 1, 2014
Agenda Item 8: Future Work of the Permanent Forum: Methods of Work

Statement Submitted by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), presented by Andrea Carmen

Thank you Madame Chair.

Although this agenda item may not be as emotional or exciting as some of the other agenda items addressing themes of profound concern to our Peoples within the United Nations (UN) system and on the ground in our communities, its importance is directly relevant to the Permanent Forum's actual capacity to be effective in impacting those very situations.

Many have noted through the years that the large quantity of recommendations produced by the Permanent Forum members, in their sincere attempt to be responsive to the concerns expressed by participants during the sessions, make implementation difficult if not impossible. This can also serve to produce frustrations and unmet expectations for the Indigenous Peoples and organizations who worked for their adoption and anticipate that immediate steps will be taken towards their implementation.

In addition, regarding the recommendations which have been or are in the process of being implemented, there is no clear method for the Indigenous Peoples who are concerned or impacted to be informed of the progress.

One example of special concern to our organization and our affiliates in various regions of the world, and to my own Yaqui Nation in Sonora Mexico, was the adoption by the UNPFII at its 13th session in 2014 of a groundbreaking recommendation calling for a legal review of the United Nations Rotterdam Convention. This UN Convention permits the export and import of pesticides which are banned in the exporting country due to proven devastating impacts of the health, including reproductive health of women, children, unborn babies and other members of the communities where they are applied.

The recommendation in paragraph 16, referencing the report of the Expert Group Meeting on Reproductive and Sexual Health from earlier that year, read as follows:

“Considering their impact on the sexual health and reproductive rights of indigenous peoples, the Permanent Forum calls, in paragraph 62 of the report, for “a legal review of United Nations chemical conventions, in particular the Rotterdam Convention, to ensure that they are in conformity with international human rights standards, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

Several attempts by IITC to find out about the outcomes of this recommendations made it clear that in this case at least the process for follow up and implementation had not been clarified. With the Conference of the Parties of the UN Chemicals Conventions taking place next month in Geneva, our delegation is still not clear as to what response we can report to the Rotterdam Convention Parties or Secretariat which might initiate change.

Please be assured that IITC is not intending to be critical of the members of the Forum nor the Secretariat. They are sincere and hardworking and make every effort to include the concerns of the participants in its reports and recommendations. A core impediment to making an effective and clear plan for follow up and implementation in our view is that the report is usually adopted Friday afternoon of the 2nd week, and there is no additional meeting time scheduled after that for the Forum members and the Secretariat to decide how to follow up on the recommendations until several months later.

We therefore make the following specific recommendations regarding Methods of Work:

- 1) The number of recommendations adopted by the Forum should be limited to no more than 20 totals per session at the most.
- 2) The meetings set aside for agenda items and interventions should end after the half day morning session Wednesday of the 2nd week. The Wednesday afternoon and the Thursday Morning sessions of the 2nd week would be closed meetings to finalize the report.
- 3) The report will be presented and adopted Thursday afternoon the 2nd week.
- 4) The last Friday all day would be another closed session to discuss specifically how to follow up on the recommendations to ensure they are implemented or advanced, including any specific tasks, correspondence or communication required. The recommendations could each be assigned to one or more Forum members and/or the Secretariat as long as each recommendation has someone (and a timeline) determined to ensure effective follow up.
- 5) The assignments for specific recommendations will be made public via the UNPFII web page so Indigenous Peoples, agencies and other interested participants will know who they can contact for information on outcomes, to offer additional information or other reasons.
- 6) A report will be posted each year in advance of the UNPFII sessions as to the steps taken and the specific outcomes for each recommendation from the year before.
- 7) Adequate financial means should be made available to the members for follow up as required.

Madame Chair, we greatly appreciate that this agenda item has been included in programme of work for this session. We look forward to hearing the positive contributions of other participants and the proposals finally put forward by the UNPFII members based on this input. We stress again that we greatly appreciate the efforts of the current and past members and recognize the challenges as well as the advances that have been made in the work of the UNPFII. We hope that these recommendations will be of assistance to build upon what has been achieved to date.

As a final point regarding future work, the IITC requests that the UNPFII propose once again to ECOSOC that its name be changed to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples. Our true identity as Peoples must be fully recognized and respected by the United Nations, 8 years after the term "Indigenous Peoples" was adopted as the minimum standard by the General Assembly. This change will no doubt also contribute to and enhance the work of the Forum through affirming the dignity, respect and full recognition for the rights and identity of Indigenous Peoples within the UN System.

Thank you.